

The SANTA FE TRAIL

Oration Delivered by Miss Zoe Davis at the Eighteenth Annual Commencement Exercises of Raton High School.....

The oration delivered by Miss Zoe Davis at the graduating exercises of the Raton high school in the Coliseum last Friday night on "The Santa Fe Trail" was ably written and received so many favorable notices that we reproduce it herewith for the benefit of our readers. It is as follows:

Accustomed as we are to think of the vast steppes of Russia and Siberia as alike strange and boundless, and to deal with the interior of Africa as an impenetrable mystery, we lose sight of a locality in our own country that once surpassed these in virgin grandeur, in majestic solitude, in all the attributes of a tremendous wilderness.

This locality, still known to most people as the "West"—a term once appropriate but hardly applicable in these days of easy rail communication—was connected from the Mississippi to the blue Pacific by a famous highway, known as the "Santa Fe Trail."

Although the old trail has outlived its usefulness, it still possesses for us a more common interest, and, to us, its history is a most thrilling one.

Its age dates from before 1500, for beyond question Cabeza de Vaca, a Spanish explorer of the 16th century, traveled the old trail for many miles.

His expedition was followed by those of La Salle, De Soto, Narvaez, and Coronado, most of which failed and left the bones of leaders and followers to whiten upon the soil they had come to conquer. These also traveled near the trail.

At one extremity of this route was Ft. Leavenworth—which was the depot of supplies—at the other was Santa Fe. Both are now flourishing cities and it would be hard to imagine them in the role of trading stations.

Santa Fe of today is in especial contrast to the Santa Fe of purely Mexican inhabitants. The opinion of a traveler of the early thirties is hardly complimentary. He said, "To dignify such a collection of mud hovels with the name of 'city' is keen irony, but the appellation, 'Holy Faith,' with which its padres have endowed it is a venial sin and deserving of purgatory."

The beginning of the commerce of the prairies had no definite origin and was the result of accident rather than of any organized plan. The two first explorers of this region neglected to render an account of their mission. To Captain Zebulon Pike is due the praise of so stirring up interest after his return from this region, that the trade increased immensely, and almost of creating the trail, as it is to this trade that the Old Trail owes its prominence.

In those days it was the only connecting link between the East and the West. As one old trapper expressed it, "There wasn't nothin' in them days but the Santa Fe trail, injins and varmints."

The beginning of the trade was not direct to Santa Fe but by the circuitous trail from Taos. As the growing trade demanded a shorter route the road was changed, running along the Arkansas until the stream turned north, when it crossed that river, continued south through the Raton Pass and thence to Santa Fe, where the heavily rolling wagons and the dust-begrimed teamsters were received by the Indians and Mexicans with great excitement.

What a change has since taken place! In 1825 the traffic with New Mexico was carried on by a train of "Prairie Schooners." Today four great railroads penetrate the mountains and carry more freight in one day than was then taken in one year.

The Mexicans first insisted upon unreasonable toll, which the freighters were often obliged to pay but which Yankee ingenuity generally managed to evade. The tax upon foreign trade was removed, however, soon after the Mexican rebellion and the "Santa Fe Trail for untold ages only a simple trace across the continent" became the highway of a relatively great commerce, and, after the discovery of gold in California, the path of an enormous pilgrimage.

Pack mules were employed by the early traders and emigrants and the mules thus became an important factor in the trade. As their value increased, whole droves were frequently captured by the Indians while being transported.

These "Bandits of the trail" had soon learned that it was very easy to frighten the timid mule, by shaking their Buffalo robes and giving their blood-curdling yells. Stampedes were often serious affairs particularly with a large mule train, as it was very difficult to restrain or to recover them.

As the trade grew, the Comanches, Pawnees, and the Arapahoes became worse in their depredations and many freighters believed that they were urged on by the Mexicans who were jealous of "Los Americanos." It is true that the Mexicans often joined the Indians in their raids and the freighters were obliged to take every precaution against their combined forces.

Very rarely did a caravan, great or small, escape the eyes of these "Prairie Highwaymen."

In 1829 the plains Indians became such a terror that the government consented to send detachments of soldiers with the caravans.

The early morning was the favorite hour with the Indians for making an attack, and during these hours most diligent watch had to be kept. After having traveled several hundred miles over a trackless waste of prairie and over mountains, whose summit seemed to touch the sky, without seeing a human being or the trace of one, it was almost impossible to imagine themselves surrounded and watched by lurking foes. But when the Indians would suddenly rush from the long grass, yelling, rattling their Buffalo robes and swinging their war clubs, doubt as to the existence of foes would soon vanish.

The most remarkable event in the history of the Trail was the introduction of wagons. There were from seven to fifty of these "Prairie Schooners" in a caravan, the larger ones drawn by ten or twelve mules, the smaller ones by eight.

In the morning the signal for departure would be given by the head wagoner, and immediately the race would ensue, each teamster trying to get ready before his comrade. Soon "ALL'S SET," cried the teamsters. "Stretch Out," orders the captain and finally "Fall In" and with creaking, rumbling and cracking of whips the train would start on its way.

The caravans certainly had a wild and motley appearance. The city merchant, the farmer, the buckskin-clad backwoodsman, the scout and the wagoner with his flannel sleeved vest

went into its makeup. The variety of firearms was as great, ranging from the rifle of the backwoodsman to the knives of the Mexican, and the double barreled fowling piece of the tenderfoot.

For days the monotony of the journey would be almost unendurable. In those days the great plains were solitary and desolate beyond description. On every side interminable sand hills or rolling prairie stretched away for hundreds of miles, gradually ascending to the mountains. On these no signs of life were visible but the innumerable herds of Buffalo and antelope, which blackened the prairie for miles, and wearied the eye with their extent. But occasionally the very birds seemed to have abandoned the country in its awful silence and desolation, which was magnified by the clearness of the air distorting distances and objects, and that wierd landscape painter—the mirage.

Then the trail, lying like a brown ribbon on the plain, would ascend into the grand and imposing scenery of the mountains, where with difficulty the animals found and kept their footing among the precipitous cliffs and yawning canyons.

In the summer the vast sea of green was varied by the brown shaggy herd of Buffalo—in winter, nothing marred the snowy face of frozen plain and mountain.

When halting in Indian territory it was customary for the freighters to form a circle of the wagons, which served as a coral, camping quarters and fortress.

Few caravans or stage coaches escaped the eyes of the wily "Children of the Desert," and it was only after hard-fought and bloody battles that they were allowed to proceed on their journey or resume their position around the camp fire, from where they could hear the wierd death song of the Indians, far into the night as they buried their dead warriors beneath the prairie sod.

But too frequently no white survivor would emerge from the bloody struggle, while the redskin would return to his lodge with the booty and the scalps of the paleface. And the next caravan would find the battlefield strewn with such weapons, wreckage and mutilated bodies as had escaped the eye of the savage and that ghoul of the desert, the gray wolf.

But in the end the white race conquered and the redskin, the desert and the mountains were forced to acknowledge defeat.

Where then stood vast wastes of desert or precipitous bluffs, now repose quiet farms. Where then was war, now is peace. The type of the pioneer has vanished forever.

The grassy mound, whose tombstone is the great circle of sky, covers the resting place of the last of his class. There will be no successor, for the border is now a thing of memory and imagination.

Among the fearless hearted men who won fame in the west, are: Tim Bridger, Lucien B. Maxwell, Old Bill Williams, Wm. F. Cody or "Buffalo Bill," Kit Carson, "Uncle" Dick Wootton, and impetuous Custer, the Indian tamer.

The Indian rides on his raids no more but dwells lazily or sullenly on the land allotted him by his white brother. It must be said in his defence, however, that the Indian was at first friendly to the whites and it was only until he had been tricked and ill treated that he took the war-path against them.

Where once the Old Trail stretched its length over a land of mountain and plain, ridges and bluffs, depressions and ravines, now winds one of the greatest railroads of modern times, the one sometimes serving as a tooMria' otaoqdo ue&s araboo fackf roadbed for the other.

In the first railroad was the beginning of the end. It was this iron usurper that drove from his haunts both the redskin and the trapper. With them has gone the life of the Old Trail, the arena of their bloody struggles.

Could it speak it would tell of the hardy pioneers, whose lives made the civilization of the west possible, whose daring compelled its development, whose hardships gave birth to the American homestead and whose determined will was the factor of possible achievements."

Truly they have left their footprints on the sands of time—not the least of which is, "The Old Santa Fe Trail."

We, the class of 1907, are now at our Leavenworth. We have been equipped by our parents, teachers, and the many friends who have encouraged and urged us on. Whether we will complete our journey with pack mules or with "Prairie Schooners," depends entirely upon ourselves. We must earn our own honors.

The beginning of our journey is before us. After tonight we launch out upon the Trail of Life. Many things will be left behind, and regrettably, we say farewell to familiar scenes and faces, yet who would wish to remain idle, always subordinate—

a common teamster—when by labor one could command the caravan?

We are pioneers in the true sense of the word, about to set out on a journey into a country which we have never seen and known of only by hearsay, and into which we have no guide but the narrow trail left by our predecessors.

Though even this may be sometimes obscured by the sand and snowstorms of trouble, we will not lose courage, but set our course by the stars and push steadily on.

Who knows but that we may discover a path even superior to that of our predecessors.

We may be harassed by lurking foes and attacked by undreamed of dangers, but, grasping that weapon of the courageous—luck, we will fight our way through.

Though temerity may restrain us and pleasure lure us away, ambition leads us on, and we are determined to gain our Santa Fe.

A Growing City.

Among the many towns in the territory that are growing rapidly is the thriving mining camp of Dawson, which already claims a population of 6,000, and also that it will not be long before it attains a population of 10,000, and that it will rival Albuquerque in size and number of industries.

The purchase of the El Paso & Southwestern railroad by the Phelps-Dodge people and the great increase that will be made in the monthly coal production, and the increased number of miners that will be given employment, will all prove a stimulus to the growth of the place.

According to the school census of Dawson, 600 children attend the public schools there out of a school population of 800. A superintendent and seven teachers are employed in the schools.

In addition to the above, the general offices of the Dawson Fuel company have been moved from El Paso to Dawson, causing an increase in population of thirty people. The fuel company has just completed a large and handsome office building which has been fitted up for general office purposes and the force has already moved into the new quarters.

Claims \$3,000 to Be Due Him.

A hearing in the case of Albert Wallis vs The Raton Coal and Coke company was held in the Raton office of Charles A. Speiss, Esq., Friday afternoon. W. E. Gortner, as referee, took testimony on part of the defendant.

Wallis was a contractor and in 1895 had a contract with the Raton Coal and Coke company to construct a portion of the grade leading to the mines at Willow. He claims that he did extra work, amounting to some \$3,000, at the request of the defendant company, for which he was not paid.

The plaintiff was represented at the hearing by Robert C. Gortner, of the firm of Catron & Gortner, of Santa Fe, and the defendant by Hon. C. A. Speiss. Mr. Wallis is a resident of El Paso and came to this city yesterday to attend the hearing.

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7:00 am	4:00 pm		Leaves RATON Arrives	12:15 pm	6:45 pm
7:25 am	4:25 pm	7	Leaves CLIFTON HOUSE JCT. Lv	11:57 am	6:15 pm
7:50 am	4:45 pm	13	Leaves PRESTON Arrives	11:40 am	5:45 pm
8:20 am	5:00 pm	20	Leaves KOEHLER JCT. Lv	11:00 am	5:20 pm
	5:10 pm	24	Arr. KOEHLER Arr	11:10 am	
9:10 am	5:50 pm	33	Arr. VERMILION Arr	10:15 am	4:45 pm
9:35 am	6:15 pm	41	Leaves CERROSOSO Lv	9:55 am	3:45 pm
10:20 am	6:30 pm	47	Arr. CIMARRON Arr	9:35 am	3:15 pm
11:30 am	7:20 pm	60	Leaves UTE PARK Lv		2:40 pm
			Arr. UTE PARK Arr		1:40 pm

Connects with El Paso & Southwestern Ry. train 124, arriving in Dawson, N.M., at 6:10 p.m.
Connects with El Paso & Southwestern Ry. train No. 123, leaving Dawson, N.M., at 10:35 a.m.
Stage for Van Houten meets trains at Preston, N.M.
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